

February 28, 2023

Distinguished co-chairs Osten and Walker and other members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Nancy Kirchmyer and I live in Hebron. Today I am representing the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance, a network of 50 diverse congregations working for justice. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

We citizens of CT must acknowledge that there is a real problem before us: gun violence. There is also an undeniable justice issue: Black men in Connecticut are 39 times more likely than white men to be murdered with a gun. Is that okay?? NO! Of course it is not okay.

That is why I came here from Hebron today to voice my strong support for a 20 million dollar allocation of funds, spread over 2 years, to community violence reduction efforts. Given the magnitude of the public health crisis of gun violence, I strongly believe that this increase is imperative if we want to save lives.

Right now, funding for violence prevention and intervention is not consistent enough to sustain our street outreach organizations like Hartford Communities That Care, Mothers United Against Violence, COMPASS Youth Collaborative, and others in cities across the state. They work on the front lines day and night, and we do not fund them adequately. Why is that? Do we not value them?

I know you have big decisions to make, but I believe that now is the time to invest in violence prevention.

I have had the privilege of being involved with Mothers United Against Violence since the Sandy Hook tragedy ten years ago, and I have witnessed the ongoing support and trauma care that they provide when a life is taken in Hartford. I've seen the bond that they form with the victim's family, for they too have walked that same heartbreaking path of having a beloved child taken from them by a bullet.

We need to address this epidemic of gun violence. I strongly support adding \$20 million over 2 years for violence prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery.

Last year, 39 people were killed in Hartford. That is unacceptable. Most were young men in their 20's and 30's, taken by gun violence. Those lives were precious!

Even one life taken is too many!!

Thank you for your time.
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